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ABSTRACT

This document provides lesson plans designed for teaching fourth-grade students about the religious group known as the Shakers. Preceding each of the five lessons is a list of objectives, time required, background, materials needed, classroom procedures, and suggested follow-up activities. In Lesson A, a story is read and students are asked to place the events of the story in the appropriate sequence. Lesson B discusses Shaker inventions. Lesson C exposes students to the Shakers' contributions to the arts. Lesson D focuses on Shaker music. Lesson E contains quotations that students are asked to rewrite with correct punctuation. A number of maps, photographs, and drawings appear throughout these lessons. A 13-item bibliography also is included. (DB)

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THE SHAKERS

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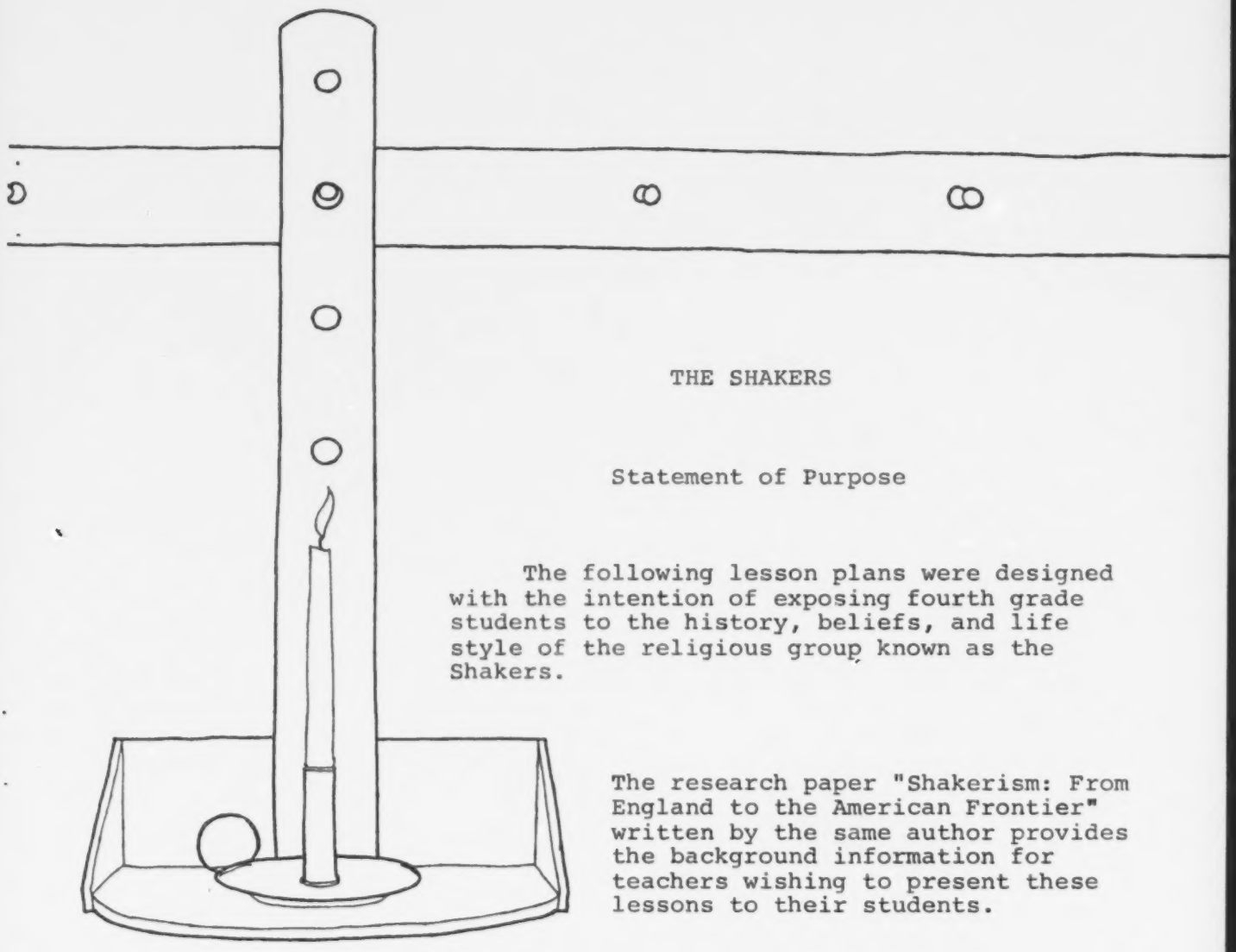


THE SHAKERS

Statement of Purpose

The following lesson plans were designed with the intention of exposing fourth grade students to the history, beliefs, and life style of the religious group known as the Shakers.

The research paper "Shakerism: From England to the American Frontier" written by the same author provides the background information for teachers wishing to present these lessons to their students.

A bibliography of other available materials on Shaker life is included.

Compiled by: Penny Howell
Indiana and the New Nation
University of Southern Indiana
Dr. Darrel Bigham
January 1991

INTRODUCTION

For well over two hundred years a religious group called Shakers had lived in America in unity, simplicity, and Christian faith. Its members have welcomed all races, liberated women, opposed war, worshipped God as Mother and Father, perfected their quiet arts and crafts, and expressed their religious joy and love for one another by dancing and singing.

One of the few faiths founded by a woman, Shakerism arrived in America in 1774 consisting only of the sect's founder and her seven devout followers. Their number grew to include at one time over six thousand believers inhabiting nineteen flourishing villages stretching from the first settlements along the eastern coast to as far west as the newly formed state of Indiana. These unique homesteads, so strange to outsiders, were heaven on earth to the Shaker converts who strove for perfection within them.

The birth of Shakerism, its movement to America and across the country to the western frontier, and its legacy of everlasting Christian faith is indeed an interesting story.

THE SHAKERS COME TO AMERICA

"Put your hands to work and your heart to God."

These are the most-often quoted words of Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shaker faith. Ann Lee was born in Manchester, England on February 28, 1736. It was at this time that England was engulfed in the great Industrial Revolution. Ann's childhood years were spent living in the squalor of Toad Lane and working in the textile mills. She learned neither to read nor write.

At age twenty-two, despairing greatly over the suffering that surrounded her, she joined James and Jane Wardley in the Quaker faith. Failing to find inner peace as Quakers, further searching led them to a group of French prophets.

These French Prophets were a group of people who had been exciled from the mountains of France because of their radical religious ideas. During worship services they whirled, shook, prophesied and spoke in unintelligible voices. By 1758, because of their association with this group, the Wardley group became known as the Shaking Quakers.

In 1762, at the age of twenty-six, Ann married a blacksmith. During the next four years church records tell of the births and deaths of all four of her children. The outcome of this tragedy was a mental collapse for Ann, followed by confinement to an insane asylum.

Viewing her loss as punishment for her sins, Ann became convinced not only that marraige was a sinful state, but that heaven was attainable here on earth by living a perfect life.

By 1772, after devoting all her strength to finding the correct path to this heavenly state, Ann emerged as the group's leader.

On July 10 in 1773, she and four of her followers were arrested for disrupting a church service. Ann was jailed for fourteen days without food or water. She told Shaker believers that during that time Jesus had appeared to her in order to reveal the true way to salvation; confession, celibacy, and perfection in life.

The following year James Whittaker,a devoted follower, announced that he had seen a vision of America. Mother Ann quickly secured passage for herself and seven followers on a ship named the Mariah, which was bound for America. They landed in New York on August 6, 1774. The Shaker religion had come to America.

LESSON PLAN A

SEQUENCING: Number the following events in the order they happened in the story.

_____ The Mariah sails for America with eight Shakers on board.

_____ Ann marries a blacksmith.

_____ Ann emerges as the leader of the Wardley group.

_____ Ann joins Jane and James Wardley's group of Quakers.

_____ Ann Lee is born in Manchester, England.

_____ Ann is confined to an insane asylum after the deaths of all four of her children.

_____ Jesus appears to Ann in her jail cell.

_____ The Shakers land in New York.

_____ Ann and four of her followers are arrested for disrupting church services.

_____ James Whittaker, a Shaker believer, has a vision of America.

LESSON PLAN B

OBJECTIVES

* The children will gain an understanding of the Shakers' contribution to the "outside world" by sharing their inventions.

* The children will become familiar with several inventions or improvements credited to the Shaker believers.

* The children will gain an understanding of how the Shaker inventions saved time and energy for the user.

TIME REQUIRED

* One class period of approximately 45 minutes.

BACKGROUND

The Shakers shared their ideas with the "outside world" by sharing their inventions. The ingenuity of these people was truly amazing; their achievements have left a great impression on our country.

The following is a comment by Eldress Emma B. King: "The Shaker sees no virtue or economy in hard labor when consecrated brain work can work out an easier method, and thus the world is richer for the many tangible proofs of the Shakers' consecrated ingenuity. Nearly all of their many valuable inventions have been unpatented. Whatever he invents is for the use of the entire world."

The flat broom, circular saw, metal pens, the wooden clothespin, the packaging of garden seeds, swivel feet on chairs, wooden measures, apple corers and parers, the mowing machine, tongue and groove boards, and the steam-driven washing machine are all credited to the Shaker membership.

MATERIALS NEEDED

* The following three pages are provided for use with this lesson.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

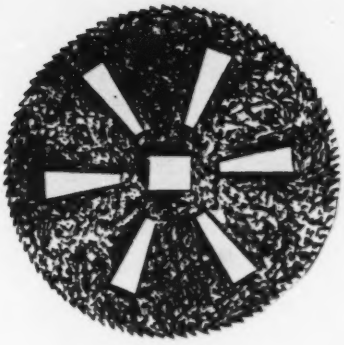
* The teacher will read or tell to the class the background information about Shaker inventions.

* The teacher will lead the class in a discussion of how such inventions saved time and energy for the worker.

* The children will choose an invention from one of the accompanying pages and write a paragraph telling how that invention made the job easier for the worker.

Early Shaker brushes and split brooms were made of hickory saplings. Later, brooms were made of broom corn. The flat broom invented by the Shakers is still used today.

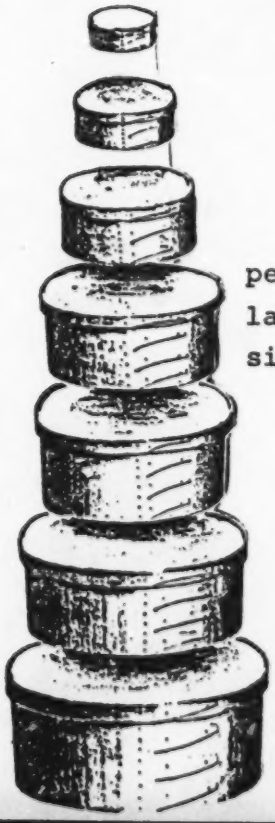
The Shakers were the first to package seeds in colorful paper packets to sell to the "outside world."



Sister Tabitha Babbit of Harvard, Massachusetts, is credited with inventing the circular saw in 1810.

Probably the most famous Shaker invention was the flat broom, shared freely with the world because the Shakers thought patenting was selfish. Brother Theodore Bates of Watervliet, New York, watched the Sisters sweeping in 1798 with their common round brooms and realized that they were wasting time and dffort. He didn't offer to help sweep, but he did flatten the brooms to make them more efficient.

Some Shaker baskets have lids permanently attached to their handles; large ones were called feather baskets since they prevented down collected for pillows from blowing away.



Brothers made nested oval wooden boxes, perhaps most symbolic of the Shaker way in their perfection, beauty, and practicality. Light and delicate as they are, they were designed the last forever, with finger joinery. Shakers knew that wood swells across the grain when damp, so they cut wooden fingers.

LESSON PLAN C

OBJECTIVES

* The students will gain an understanding of the Shakers' contribution to the art world by learning about "spirit drawings".

* The students will participate in a discussion of the different figures used in "spirit drawings".

* The students will be given an opportunity to create a "spirit drawing" of their own.

TIME REQUIRED

*One class period of approximately 45 minutes.

BACKGROUND

The Shakers made significant contributions to the world by sharing their art. The only form of drawing or painting that was acceptable in the Shaker world was a "spirit drawing". These were not hung, but kept privately as sacred images. The drawings were recordings of heavenly visions that some members received as "gifts". Most of them dated from 1840 through 1860, when Shakerism reached its peak membership. These drawings often included trees, birds, trumpets, harps, and flowers. Most were very detailed and colorful.

MATERIALS NEEDED

* Several copies of "spirit drawings" for the class to observe.

* Drawing paper, crayons, markers, etc. for use by the children while creating their own "spirit drawings".

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

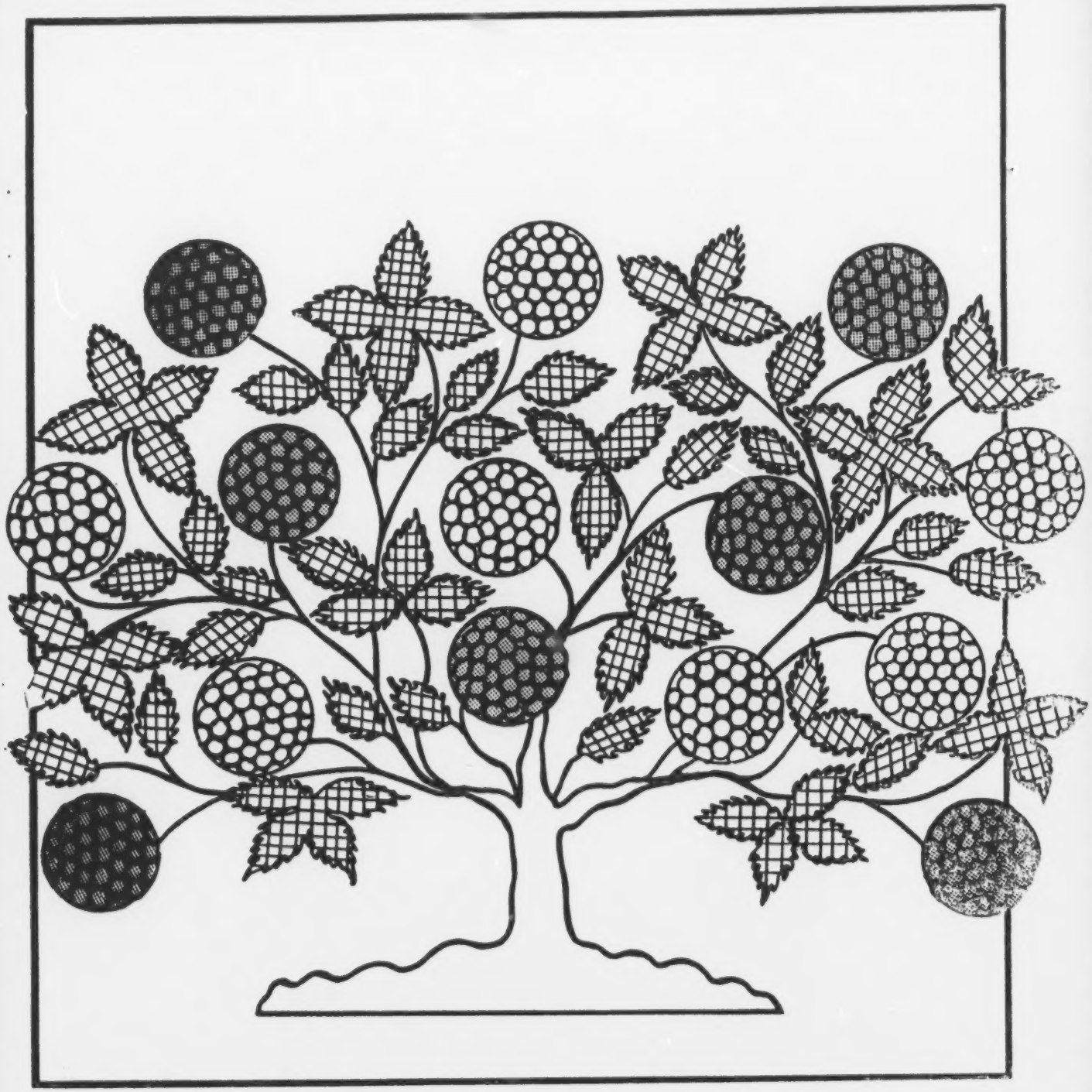
* The teacher will read or tell the history behind the "spirit drawings" of the Shakers.

* The teacher will show examples of such drawings and lead the class in a discussion of what types of figures might be included in a drawing of their own.

* The children will be allowed sufficient time to create a drawing of their own. A few of them may enjoy sharing their drawing with the class along with an explanation of the figures they chose to use.

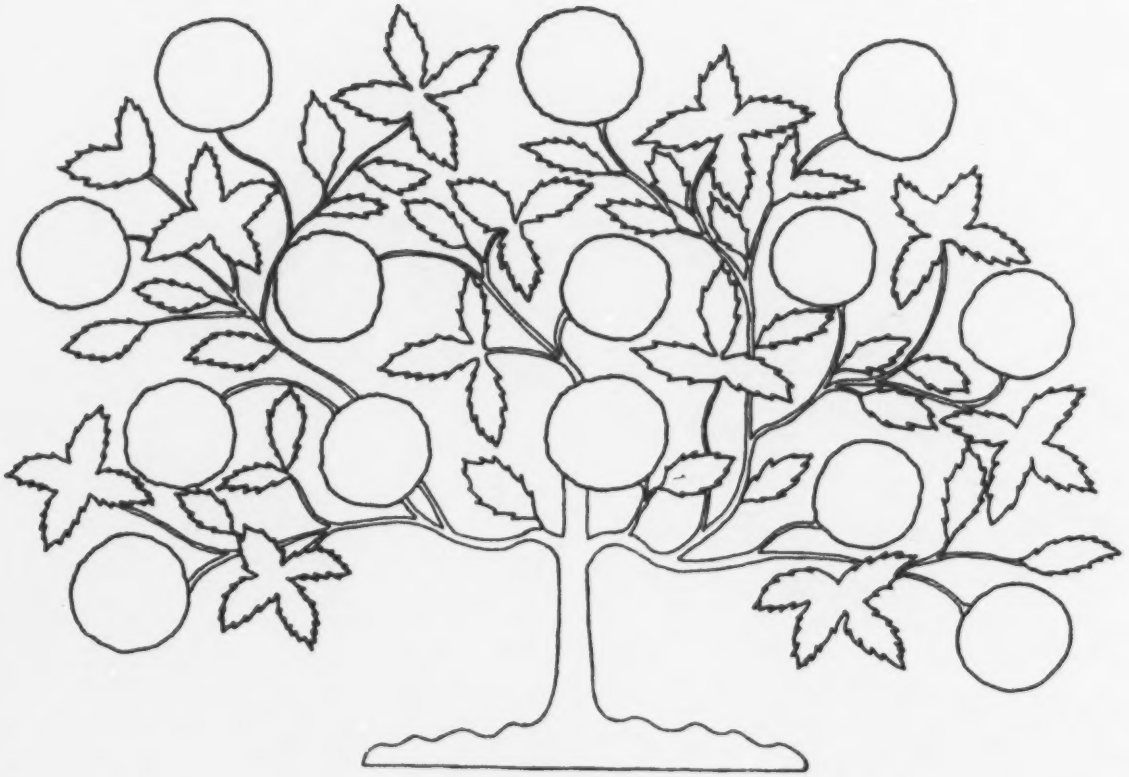
OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

* Visit the library to find other example of Shaker art.



. The Tree of Life, a spirit drawing, is recognized as a symbol of the Shakers. It is as well-known as the Shaker motto "Hands to work and hearts to God."

Tree of Life



15 Young and Mastin

The Tree of Life, known as a "spirit drawing," was one of the few art works created by the Shakers.

LESSON PLAN D

OBJECTIVES

* The children will gain an understanding of the Shakers' contribution to the music world by learning about their "gifts" of song.

* The children will learn the words and tune to the most famous Shaker song "A Gift To Be Simple."

* The children will participate in a discussion of the possible meaning of the words of the song.

TIME REQUIRED

* A class period of approximately 45 minutes.

BACKGROUND

The Shakers made significant contributions to the world by sharing their music. Music was considered the result of divine inspiration. Members who had a "gift" of music kept slates by their beds to record melodies or verses that came to them in the night.

One Eldress, Dorothy Durgin of Canterbury, wrote over 500 inspired hymns. The best-loved and widest-known Shaker hymn is "Simple Gifts". Both the words and the melody were written by Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr. He lived from 1797 until 1882.

MATERIALS NEEDED

* Sufficient copies of the song so that each child has one.

* A piano or recorded accompaniment.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

* Introduce the class to Shaker music by reading or telling background given above. (A two page history of "Simple Gifts" is also included in this unit.)

* Have students read the words of the song aloud and discuss the possible meanings of the words.

* Listen to the melody of the song. (Play tape or piano.)

* Sing the song aloud as a group.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

* Visit the library to find other Shaker hymns.

* Search through old hymnals for songs credited to Shaker composers.

Dance Song: **Simple Gifts**

Text/Tune: Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr.
1797-1882

Transcribed and edited
by Roger L. Hall

SOURCE: Western Reserve Historical Society Library, Cleveland, Ohio, Shaker Manuscript Collection, IX B (Music), Vol. SM 114, pp. 49-50

This song was composed by Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr. while he was at the Shaker community in Alfred, Maine in 1848.

The Story of 'Simple Gifts'

Shaker simplicity in song

To turn, turn will be our delight,
'Till by turning, turning we come round right.

Taking these last two lines of the famous Shaker song literally, it is now time to "come round right" and dispel the errors that have plagued this song for the past few decades. The most common error is classifying "Simple Gifts" as an "anonymous Shaker hymn."

Actually it is neither anonymous nor is it a hymn. Instead, it was composed by Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr., who composed it for dancing during Shaker worship. He is believed to have composed the song while at Alfred, Maine, in 1848.

Fortunately, the Shakers have kept good biographical records of their prominent members. Here is what Sister Mildred Barker has to say about Elder Joseph in her history of the Shaker community at Gorham, Maine:

The last surviving Gorham Shaker was Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr., who was a child of ten when his father united with the Shakers and the society in Gorham was organized. He himself became prominent and was for many years Elder of the Church Family in New Gloucester as well as first Minister of the Maine societies.

New Gloucester is today known as Sabbathday Lake, where Elder Joseph's dance song is still sung regularly. Elder Otis Sawyer from Sabbathday Lake had this to say about Elder Joseph's gift of song:

He possessed a remarkable and natural gift to sing by which he would often fill a whole assembly with the quickening power of God with his inspiration of song...

Elder Joseph was born in Cumberland, Maine, on May 6, 1797. He died at the age of 85 at New Gloucester on July 4, 1882, having spent the greater part of his life devoted to Shakerism in Maine.

According to Shaker tradition, only one verse songs like Elder Joseph's "Simple Gifts" were used for dancing. Shaker hymns, consisting of two or more verses, were generally reserved for the opening and closing of the service. Sometimes songs were given the title of a particular dance. Such is the case with "Simple Gifts," which in one Shaker music manuscript is titled as "Quick Dance."

Elder Joseph Brackett, Jr., 1797-1882

Reprinted from THE SHAKER MESSENGER, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Winter, 1980)

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This designation implies a lively tempo for both the singers and the dancers. The most likely pattern for this dance would be as follows: single files of brethren and sisters two or three abreast, proceeding with utmost precision around the meeting room. In the center of the room would be a small group of singers singing the dance songs over and over again until everyone was both exhilarated and exhausted.

One Shaker eyewitness account tells of Elder Joseph singing "Simple Gifts" while turning with his coat tails flying. Being within the period of "Mother's Work," the later 1840s were probably the peak years for such vigorous Shaker dancing.

Even though "Simple Gifts" was one of the more popular dance songs of its time, it did not become known to the "world's people" until about 100 years later. Edward Deming Andrews was the first one to bring the song out from the pages of a Shaker manuscript tunebook by Mary Hazzard. Andrews included the song in his pioneering collection of Shaker tunes, published in 1940.

It was in that collection that composer Aaron Copland found "Simple Gifts" and arranged a set of variations on it as part of his award-winning ballet score, **Appalachian Spring.** The ballet was first performed on October 30, 1944 by Martha Graham and her dance company at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Ironically, there were never any Shaker settlements in the rural Pennsylvania locale of the ballet. Yet, Copland's instinctive choice of using a Shaker dance song was ideal for accompanying the simple choreographic movements in the ballet. He has said that he was naturally drawn to the tune because it was the title of the Andrews book, but more importantly because it appealed to him.

At this point, perhaps it should be mentioned that this song has two other commonly used titles besides "Simple Gifts." It is sometimes known as "The Gift to be Simple" and otherwise known by its first line of text: " 'Tis the gift to be simple." To avoid confusion, I have chosen the most commonly used title as it appears in the Andrews book.

During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, "Simple Gifts" has been performed and recorded by many different artists, from folk to opera. Among the more popular arrangements of the song are those by Aaron Copland and Judy Collins. Both of these settings are well thought of by the present day Sabbathday Lake Shakers.

In the early 1960s, a new song was created that was based on the "Simple Gifts" tune. This new song was titled "Lord of the Dance" and was composed by an Englishman, Sydney Carter. He wrote five new stanzas of text and arranged the Shaker tune to suit the words of his song. It was first published in 1963 and has since gone on to become a very popular song on its own. In 1981, a recording of both "Simple Gifts" and "Lord of the Dance" was made by two highly respected singers: Benjamin Luxon and Bill Crofut.

The song must have had lasting appeal for Aaron Copland, since he arranged it a second time for voice and piano as part of his **Old American Songs** collection. Even such an unlikely group as The Metropolitan Opera Madrigal Singers have recorded "Simple Gifts." Unfortunately, they have chosen to sing it as a solemn hymn rather than as a lively dance song.

Who better to sing the song correctly than the Shakers themselves. In 1976, the Sabbathday Lake Shakers included the song in their latest recording of Shaker spirituals. They sing the song as it should be sung — in a simple and natural vocal style.

Somewhat analogous to this vocal style is the recorded version by the Plymouth Church Chancel Choir. This version marks the first time a different variant of the tune has been used, rather than the commonly accepted one found in the Andrews book. Since both versions of the song are found in Shaker music manuscripts of about the same period, the differences between the two are very slight. The major difference is that the one performed by the Plymouth Church singers features a smoother melodic line and a more rhythmic opening which is consistent with the rest of the song.

But all of this discussion should not obscur the real value of the song. That is, the ideal blending of simple words and music to express the unity of the Shaker spirit. But remember, it was written as a dance song — so sing it with gusto!

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LESSON PLAN E

Mother Ann Lee, the founder of Shakerism, was loved and respected by her followers. Her words of advice were often written down and quoted many times throughout the years by Shaker believers.

Rewrite these famous quotations of Mother Ann on the lines below. Don't forget to use quotation marks, commas, capitals and periods.

1. mother ann said do your work as if you had a thousand years to live, and as you knew you would die tomorrow

_____

_____

_____

2. hands to work and hearts to god mother ann told her followers

_____

_____

_____

3. mother ann advised trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle

_____

_____

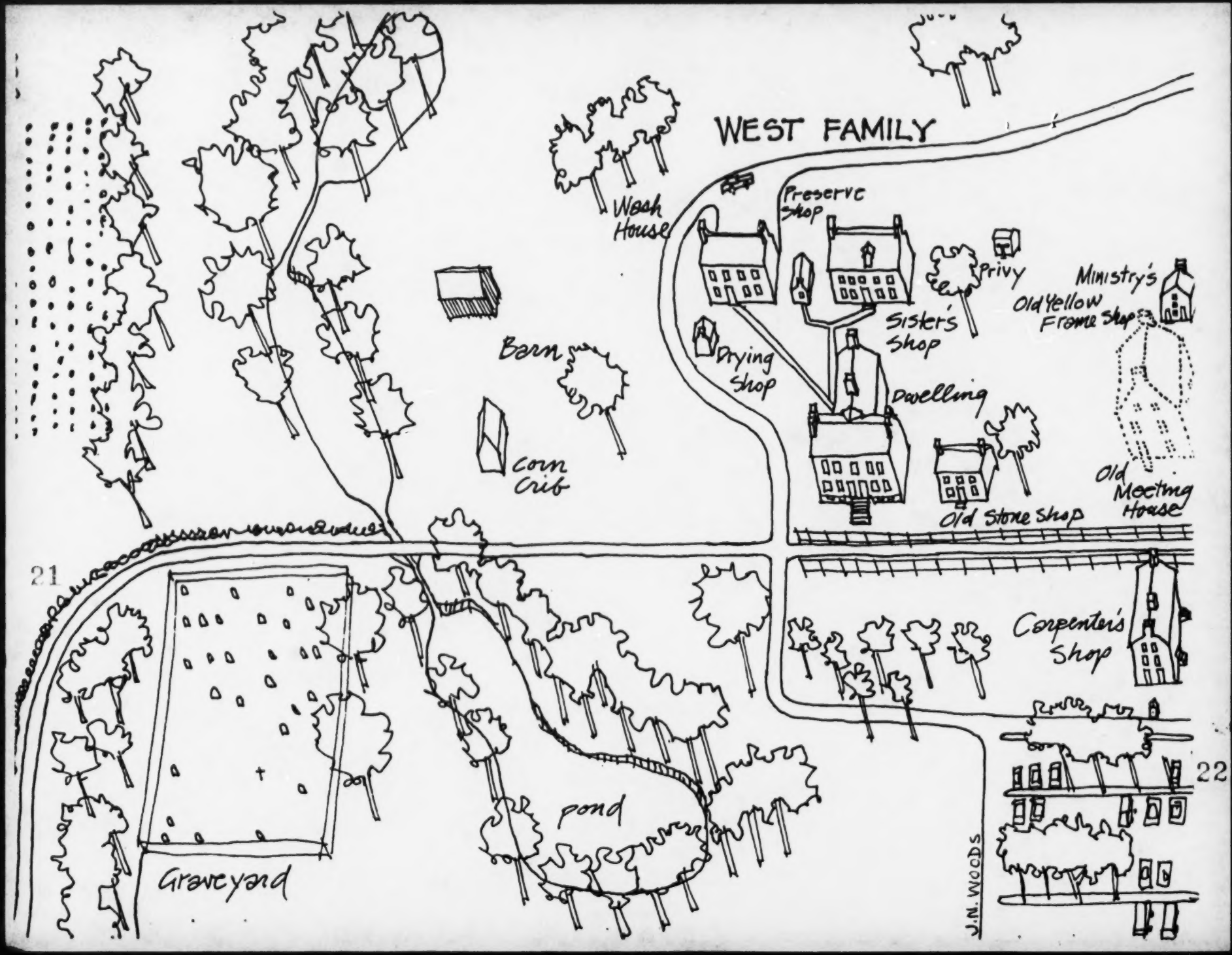
_____

4. when the numbers have decreased so that a child may count them on one hand, there will come a time of great revival

_____

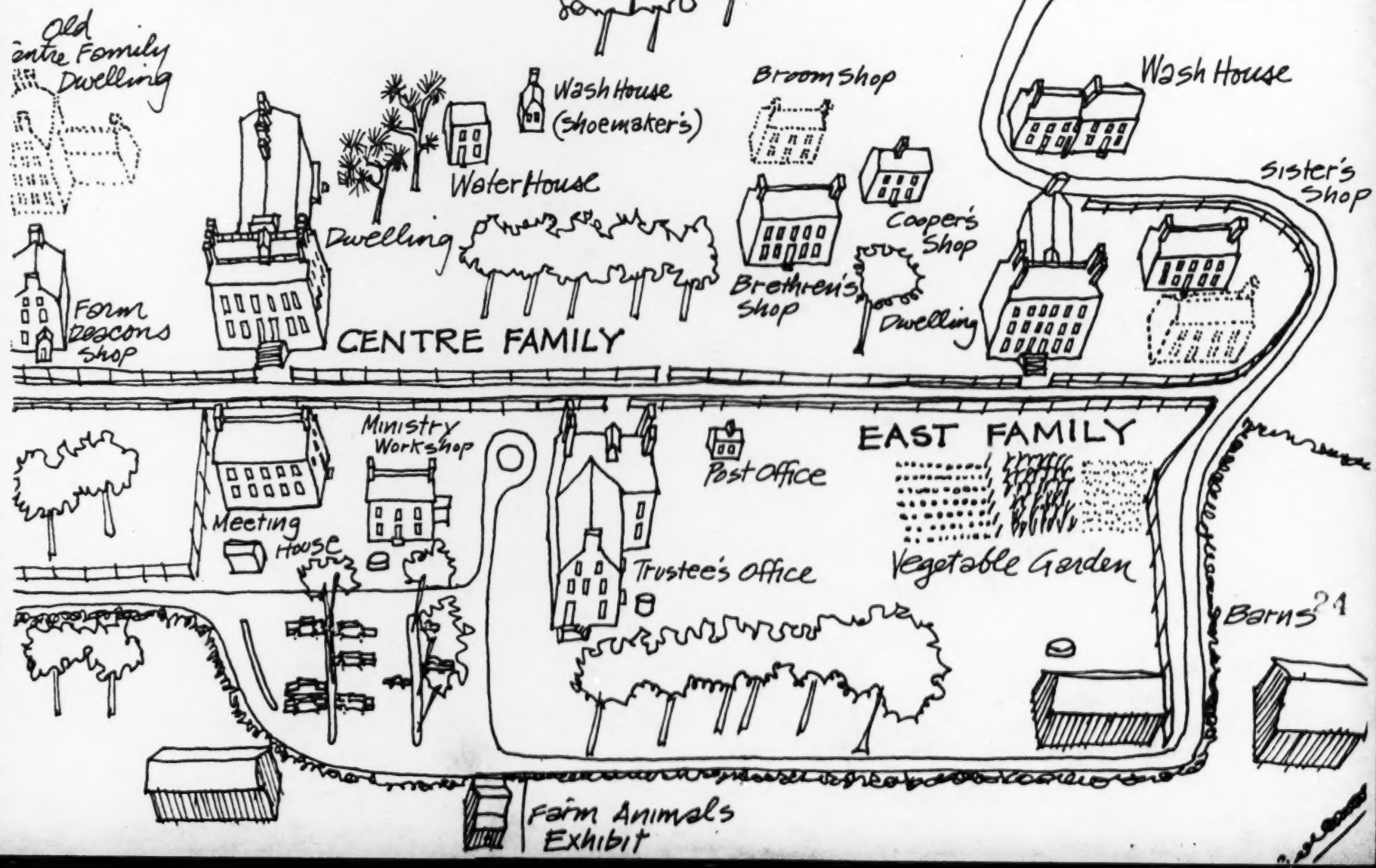
_____

_____


WEST FAMILY
Wash House
Preserve Shop
Privy
Ministry's
Old Yellow Frame Shop
Sister's Shop
Drying Shop
Barn
Dwelling
Corn Crib
Old Meeting House
Old Store Shop
21
Carpenter's Shop
22
pond
Graveyard
J.N. WOODS

Pleasant Hill, Kentucky

Imagine a village full of life and activity —wagons on the road to Lexington, men and women in the gardens and shops, people going about their work—this was what Pleasant Hill was really like.



DISTRIBUTION AND SPREAD OF THE SHAKER POPULATION ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

KEY
- SHAKER COMMUNITIES
- CITIES
- STATE LINES
- ▲ EXISTING COMMUNITY
- △ RESTORED BUILDINGS OR MUSEUM
- ◇ FORMER COMMUNITY

NOS:	COMMUNITIES		FOUNDING DATE
1	New Lebanon, New York (later Mount Lebanon)	△	1787
2	Watervliet, New York	△	1787
3	Enfield, Connecticut	◇	1790
4	Hancock, Massachusetts	△	1790
5	Harvard, Massachusetts	◇	1791
6	Canterbury, New Hampshire	▲	1792
7	Tyringham, Massachusetts	◇	1792
8	Alfred, Maine	◇	1793
9	Enfield, New Hampshire	△	1793
10	Shirley, Massachusetts	◇	1793
11	New Gloucester, Maine (later Sabbathday Lake)	▲	1794
12	Pleasant Hill, Kentucky	△	1806
13	Union Village, Ohio	◇	1806
14	Watervliet, Ohio	◇	1806
15	South Union, Kentucky	△	1807
16	Gorham, Maine	◇	1808
17	West Union, Indiana	◇	1810
18	Savoy, Massachusetts	◇	1817
19	North Union, Ohio	◇	1822
20	Whitewater, Ohio	◇	1824
21	Groveland, New York	◇	1836
22	Sodus Bay, New York	◇	1826
23	Narcoossee, Florida	◇	1896
24	White Oak, Georgia	◇	1898

The Canterbury Meetinghouse (1792) was one of several nearly identical Meetinghouses designed by Brother Moses Johnson. All had gambrel (or "barn") roofs and double doors—left for Brothers, right for Sisters. Interior woodwork pegs and trim were painted a uniform "Meetinghouse blue." Inside, a visitor, after watching the Shakers dance in worship, noted in 1875: "All the movements are performed with much precision and in exact order."

p. 92

Shaker beliefs in simplicity, celibacy, and equality of the sexes were reflected in their simple double-doored Dwellinghouses, like this one built in 1817 at the East Family of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Brothers used the left side, Sisters the right.

The Dwellinghouse (1837) at Enfield, New Hampshire, was built to last forever. The solid granite blocks are "laid as if for all time."

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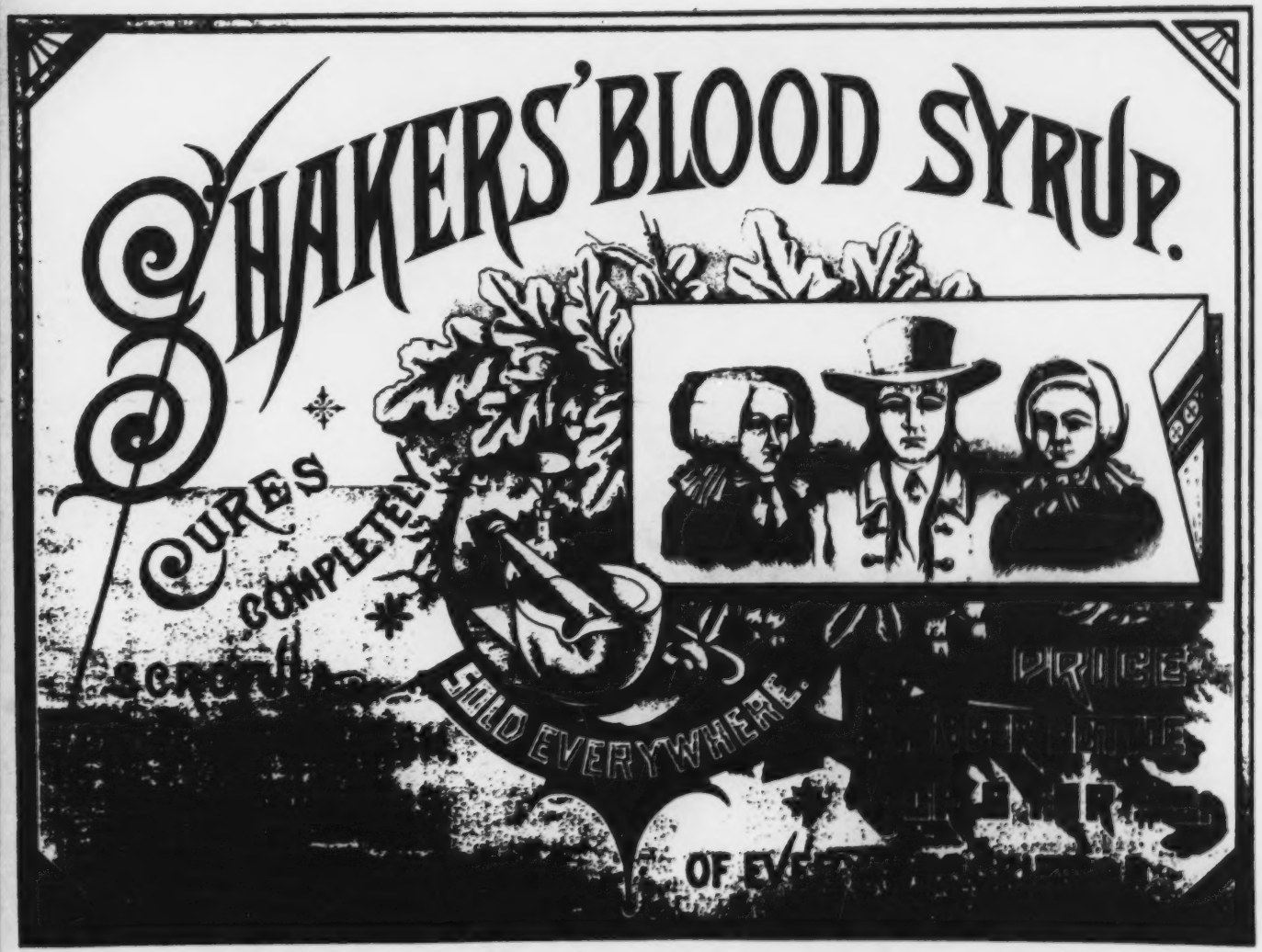

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